

Application No. 09/934310
Page 4

Amendment
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-US04

In The Claims:

Claims 1-33. (canceled)

Claim 34. (currently amended) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent ~~having a diameter throughout its length and~~ comprising:
a plurality of annular elements, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; and
at least a portion of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state; wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is formed from a tube.

Claim 35. (previously added) The stent of claim 34, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration, and wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

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Claim 36. (cancelled).

Claim 37. (previously added) The stent of claim 34 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 38. (previously added) The stent of claim 34 wherein the diameter of the stent continuously increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 39. (currently amended) A stent having an unexpanded state and an expanded state, the stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent ~~having a diameter throughout its length and~~ comprising:
a plurality of annular elements,
the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state with the diameter of the stent continuously increasing from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end;
wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is formed from a tube.

Claim 40. (previously added) The stent of claim 39, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration, and wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 41. (cancelled).

Claim 42. (new) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

Application No. 09/934310
Page 5

Amendment
Attorney Docket No. S63.2N-8429-US04

a plurality of interconnected annular elements, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; wherein at least a portion of the stent has a tapered configuration in the expanded state; and wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is formed from a single piece of material.

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Claim 43. (new) The stent of claim 42, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration.

Claim 44. (new) The stent of claim 43, wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

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Claim 45. (new) The stent of claim 44 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 46. (new) The stent of claim 44 wherein the diameter of the stent continuously increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.
